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Report of the Peacebuilding Commission

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Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its eleventh session

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), in which the Peacebuilding Commission was requested to submit an annual report to the Assembly for an annual debate and review. The report will also be submitted to the Council, pursuant to its resolution 1646 (2005), for an annual debate. The report covers the eleventh session of the Commission, held from 1 January to 31 December 2017.

2. The report has also been prepared pursuant to identical resolutions on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)), in which the Commission was encouraged to review its provisional rules of procedure through its Organizational Committee, as well as to consider diversifying its working methods to enhance its efficiency and flexibility in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

3. In that regard, the structure and content of the present report reflect the work carried out by the Commission in implementing relevant recommendations contained in the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture and the priorities identified in the report of the Commission on its tenth session.

II. Work of the Peacebuilding Commission

A. Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: opportunities and challenges

4. The work of the Commission at its eleventh session was characterized by efforts to implement the recommendations contained in the above-mentioned resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. In those resolutions, both the General Assembly and the Security Council identify sustaining peace as:

> a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which

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encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development, and emphasizing that sustaining peace is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the Government and all other national stakeholders, and should flow through all three pillars of the United Nations engagement at all stages of conflict, and in all its dimensions, and needs sustained international attention and assistance.

Throughout the reporting period, the Commission addressed an increased number of country-specific, regional and thematic issues to help sustain attention to and enhance coherence in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Country-specific situations

5. With respect to Burundi, the Commission pursued its broad re-engagement with the Government, national stakeholders and the international community in support of regional efforts to overcome the current crisis and with a focus on mitigating its socioeconomic impact on the population. In March 2017, the Chair of the Burundi configuration travelled to the country, where he briefed the President of Burundi and other high-ranking interlocutors on the socioeconomic consultations that he had organized with the United Nations, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the African Development Bank in Geneva in November 2016. During the same trip, he co-hosted a working lunch with the Government and the Resident Coordinator ad interim on the country's socioeconomic challenges, the macroeconomic situation and ways to mobilize support for ongoing responses. The visit also allowed the Chair to gain first-hand insight into the engagement of the Peacebuilding Fund in Burundi. On his way to Burundi, the Chair met with the facilitator of the East African Community, Benjamin Mkapa, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania and the World Bank, and other interlocutors in Dar es Salaam. On 21 April, the Chair of the configuration undertook a trip to Washington, D.C., in order to pursue his engagement with the World Bank and IMF. He also met with the Minister of Finance of Burundi, who was in Washington to participate in the Spring Meetings of the international financial institution. In July, the Chair again travelled to Burundi, where he attended a follow-up socioeconomic retreat organized by the Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation. Its main objective was to identify the main socioeconomic challenges faced by the country in the areas of agriculture/food security, health and education and to discuss possible responses, as well as to identify the challenges of cooperation. In their joint conclusions, the Government and the participating partners expressed their wish to continue the socioeconomic dialogue and involve additional partners. In October, the Chair of the configuration used the opportunity of a visit to Addis Ababa to meet with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of External Relations and International Cooperation of Burundi, high-ranking representatives of the African Union, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union.

6. The Commission continued to encourage and support dialogue aimed at resolving the political crisis, including the engagement of relevant actors from the region. In parallel, it continued to serve as a platform for dialogue between Burundi and its development partners, with a view to assessing the country's humanitarian *socioeconomic and macroeconomic* challenges and creating incentives for overcoming the obstacles that have stalled international cooperation. The Commission's engagement with Burundi has been guided by a coherent approach. In

that regard, meetings held in New York and visits carried out to Burundi benefited from extensive briefings and discussions on progress and challenges.

7. In terms of the Central African Republic, the Commission sought to sustain the international commitment expressed at the donor conference held in Brussels in November 2016. The Commission presented, with the approval of its membership, a workplan dedicated to the implementation of, and the provision of sustained support to the international community for, the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. In that regard, the Commission organized a meeting attended by the President of the Central African Republic in March 2017, providing a platform for high-level engagement and a reaffirmation of the commitments made at the Brussels Conference in support of the Plan. In June, the Commission organized a meeting on pillar I (security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the rule of law and reconciliation) of the Plan, which allowed the Minister of Justice of the Central African Republic and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic to update members on both the progress made and the challenges faced in the implementation of that crucial pillar. The Chair of the Central African Republic configuration then travelled to the country in July to engage with the Government and other national stakeholders, as well as regional and international stakeholders, on the country's peacebuilding and recovery agenda and to discuss the progress made in the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, with a focus on resource mobilization and coherence. Following the visit, the Chair drew the attention of the Government and the international community to the risk of further sectarian violence. On the basis of his report, the Commission advocated a reinforcement of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and additional efforts to promote social cohesion and community reconciliation. The Commission reiterated those recommendations at the high-level side event on the Central African Republic co-convened by the President of the Central African Republic and the Secretary-General on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly on 19 September.

8. At the request of the Government of Colombia, the Commission convened a meeting on 13 November 2017 to discuss the peace process in that country. Participants highlighted the success story of Colombia, welcoming in particular the strong national ownership of the peace process and the advantage of having solid and democratic institutions. The fact that the funding mechanisms for support from the international community had been created in anticipation of the needs of the peace process, and that the mechanisms had been brought together under one government office, was identified as an important step in allowing for better coordination and alignment with government priorities. The Minister for Post-Conflict, Human Rights and Security of Colombia and the General Director of the Territorial Renewal Agency highlighted the developments over the previous year and the challenges ahead. They emphasized that national reconciliation was a key factor and stressed the need for comprehensive rural reform that would remove the divide between urban and rural areas. The Minister also described the efforts being made to harness private sector support for the peace process through special tax regimes. Two leaders of Colombian civil society shared their personal stories about living through conflict and the hardship that their communities had faced. The Resident Coordinator for Colombia emphasized that the United Nations was fully committed to supporting the implementation of the peace agreement. Several speakers welcomed the engagement of the Peacebuilding Fund, which, by acting swiftly and flexibly, could help to jump start the process for the implementation of the programmes related to the peace agreement.

9. At the request of the Government of the Gambia, the Commission held several meetings. The discussions were focused on assisting the country at its critical time of transition and maintaining international attention and support with respect to the new Government of the Gambia. The Chair of the Commission, the Permanent Representative of the Gambia to the United Nations and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support visited the country on 20 and 21 March 2017 and met with a wide range of stakeholders, including the President of the Gambia, ministers, the leadership of the armed forces and the police, the Chief Justice, the Independent Electoral Commission and representatives of civil society organizations and the diplomatic community, to gain a better understanding of the situation on the ground as well as of the Government's priorities in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Following the visit, on 19 April, the Commission convened for the first time a meeting on the Gambia to discuss the peacebuilding priorities of the new Government as well as the rapid allocation by the Peacebuilding Fund of resources to support the country's efforts for transitional justice and security sector reform.

10. The Commission convened another meeting on the situation on 4 December to maintain international attention and support with respect to the peacebuilding priorities of the Gambia. The Attorney General and Minister of Justice briefed the Commission on the Government's ongoing efforts to promote transitional justice, in particular the draft bill on the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission. The Resident Coordinator also gave a briefing on the overall situation in the Gambia and the efforts of the United Nations to support the peacebuilding priorities of the Gambia in a coherent manner. The Commission welcomed the Government's strong commitment and efforts to build and sustain peace in the country and discussed ways to provide further support for such efforts.

11. In connection with Guinea, pursuant to a review of the scope of the country's engagement with the Commission, initiated in 2016 at the request of the President of Guinea, on 12 July 2017 the Commission decided to terminate the Guinea configuration while maintaining the Commission as a platform for supporting Guinea in a flexible manner, at the request of the Government.

12. With regard to Guinea-Bissau, the focus of the Commission's work was to support the finding of a solution to the two-year political impasse in the country. Through statements made to the Security Council, press statements and consultations held in New York, the Commission provided support for the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to implement the six-point Roadmap for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau and the Conakry Agreement on the Implementation of the ECOWAS Roadmap. During his trip to Bissau in July 2017, the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration engaged in consultations with a broad range of stakeholders, including the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the President of the Supreme Court and a number of ministers and members of political parties. The Chair also met with the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. In Lisbon, on his return journey, the Chair met with the Executive Secretary of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and discussed the role of the Community in supporting Guinea-Bissau and helping to find a solution to the political situation. The Commission was briefed by government officials, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau and civil society organizations, including the women's facilitation group, throughout the year. Those consultations, as the Chair reported to the Security Council in August, highlighted the complexity of the political impasse. While the Conakry Agreement remains a fundamental point of reference for most political actors, it continues to be the subject of conflicting interpretations.

13. In view of the preparations for the legislative elections scheduled for May 2018 in Guinea-Bissau, the Chair of the configuration met with the representatives of the

National Electoral Commission during his trip to Bissau, and in December the Commission was briefed on the developments in the country, including the major peacebuilding projects being carried out there. While the National Electoral Commission had finalized a timeline for the elections, the Peacebuilding Commission was also informed that preparatory steps would have to be taken, including updating the voter registration lists and appointing a new President of the National Electoral Commission.

14. In respect of Liberia, the Commission prioritized two key issues: the development and implementation of the country's peacebuilding plan, and support for the transition from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to a follow-on United Nations presence. On 20 March, the Government of Liberia submitted the peacebuilding plan requested by the Security Council in its resolution 2333 (2016). In that connection, the Commission played a strong role in supporting the work of the Government and UNMIL in Monrovia and worked closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Political Affairs in New York. In Monrovia, the Peacebuilding Support Office facilitated the efforts of the various ministries and departments of the Government of Liberia in the development of the peacebuilding plan. The Commission convened a series of meetings at both the expert and ambassadorial levels to propose inputs for the draft plan and monitor its implementation after its submission to the Council in March 2017. Key issues raised at those meetings included the need for consultations with civil society, political actors, the United Nations country team and the donor community, and for the plan to build upon existing frameworks related to peacebuilding, such as the Agenda for Transformation and the statement of mutual commitments on peacebuilding in Liberia.

15. Regarding the transition from UNMIL to a follow-on United Nations presence, the Commission actively engaged with the leadership of the Mission through a visit by the Chair of the Liberia configuration and the convening of ambassadorial and expert meetings. The Commission recommended the continuation of the good offices role and political accompaniment of the United Nations, as well as the provision of the expertise needed for political analysis and the implementation of the peacebuilding plan after the closure of UNMIL. The Commission drew the attention of members of the Security Council to the high risks associated with the imminent resource "cliff" after the Mission's closure and strongly advocated the securing of reliable funding and the creation of a multi-partner trust fund to provide financing for the transition. Furthermore, the Commission organized a series of meetings on the preparations for the 2017 legislative and presidential electoral process, providing a platform for representatives from the National Electoral Commission, non-governmental organizations and regional observer missions to present their analysis and identify challenges. In that regard, the Peacebuilding Fund supported a project focused on enhancing the participation of young people in the elections. Finally, both in the interactions of the Chair of the Liberia configuration during his trip to Liberia and in statements made to the Council, the Commission advocated the adoption of reforms needed to address the root causes of the conflict, including decentralization, gender and land reform.

16. With regard to the preparations for the presidential, parliamentary and local council elections to be held in March 2018 in Sierra Leone, the Commission held several meetings to provide a platform for discussions among the Commission's members, representatives of the Government of Sierra Leone, the National Electoral Commission and civil society, as well as the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies working in the country. The Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration travelled to the country and met with a broad range of stakeholders to maintain the interest and

support of the international community regarding Sierra Leone as it entered a crucial electoral process and to ensure that the necessary resources had been secured.

17. On 7 June, at the request of the Government of Solomon Islands, the Commission convened a meeting that testified to the importance of assisting the country in undergoing transitions by providing long-term perspectives on peacebuilding. At a time when the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands was withdrawing from the country, the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands had requested the Commission to provide its platform in order to discuss the good practices and current challenges of his country. The meeting marked another important step in the implementation of recommendations contained in the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, particularly in connection with the importance of strengthening the synergies between the Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund. The participants in the meeting benefited from briefings by senior officials of the United Nations, including the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the Resident Coordinator, representatives of the Pacific Islands Forum and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and a youth representative. Moreover, the Prime Minister recognized the critical role played by the Fund and called for a partnership between his Government and the Commission.

18. On 20 November, at the request of the Government of Sri Lanka, the Commission convened a meeting to discuss the peacebuilding experiences of the country. The meeting was attended by the Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Secretary-General of the Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms and a representative of civil society in Sri Lanka. The meeting was focused on the country's comprehensive efforts to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity, examining socioeconomic development, reconciliation efforts and transitional justice initiatives undertaken by the Government to date. It was an important opportunity for the Commission to discuss the ways in which the United Nations could support the Government in the future. Speakers also underlined the need for an inclusive approach to facilitate lasting peace, highlighting the positive role that women, young people and civil society could play in the country's peacebuilding process. The role of the Peacebuilding Fund in supporting the peacebuilding priorities of Sri Lanka was a particular focus, and participants underscored the importance of such discussions as a good practice to enhance coherence between the Commission and the Fund. Representatives also noted that the Commission, as an intergovernmental platform that Member States could use to share their good practices and challenges in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, was providing an opportunity for conflict-affected countries to identify common peacebuilding trends and learn from their respective experiences.

Regional situations

19. On 20 January, the Security Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/2) emphasizing the importance of the convening role of the Commission in peacebuilding efforts and thus, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), in mobilizing deeper commitment and partnership between the United Nations system, the countries of the Sahel and other international and regional partners with a view to advancing the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel in collaboration with UNOWAS. In response to a request made by the Council, the Commission held a meeting on 6 March to discuss the situation in the Sahel. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, the High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel, the Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel and representatives of UNDP and the Peacebuilding

Support Office briefed the Commission. Several speakers highlighted the importance of a regional approach in addressing cross-border challenges and strengthening partnerships. In that connection, the Commission recognized the unique role of the Peacebuilding Fund in supporting cross-border peacebuilding initiatives in the region. The Commission encouraged efforts to enhance coordination and cooperation among the countries in the region, the United Nations and other regional and international actors. A number of members highlighted the need to go beyond the peace and security response and strengthen development and humanitarian assistance to effectively address the challenges facing the Sahel region.

20. The Chair of the Commission, together with the Permanent Representative of Chad to the United Nations and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, attended the fifth meeting of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel, held in Chad on 14 June. A number of speakers pointed out the continuing fragile security situation in the Sahel, despite the multiple initiatives focused on the region, and called on the relevant actors to act with greater cooperation and solidarity. Many participants reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining the Platform as the political coordination framework to foster coherence and coordination among the various efforts to address the challenges in the region.

21. On 19 June, the President of the Security Council convened an informal interactive dialogue on the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin with the Peacebuilding Commission, in which a number of members recognized that the challenges facing the Sahel region went beyond the security dimension.

22. The Commission also convened a joint meeting with the Economic and Social Council on 28 June. The Deputy Secretary-General, together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and the Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of UNDP, participated. The event was focused on ways to overcome the multidimensional challenges facing the Sahel region by addressing the root causes of crisis pertaining to the social, economic and environmental factors in the region. Member States discussed the importance of continuing the efforts of the Council and the Commission to support a coordinated and coherent United Nations response to the peacebuilding challenges in the Sahel. The efforts being made to address the cross-border challenges facing the Sahel region to foster stability, build the resilience of communities and enhance economic opportunities were deemed important. Several delegations noted that the Council could use its coordination and oversight role with respect to the United Nations development system to promote a coordinated and coherent approach in the Organization's response. The Commission expressed its readiness to continue to assist UNOWAS, regional institutions and all countries in the Sahel area through its peacebuilding work.

23. The Commission convened another meeting on 13 December. The Deputy Secretary-General briefed the Commission on the ongoing efforts within the United Nations system to enhance coordination and coherence in the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, including through the mapping of the 17 strategies implemented by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and through the development of a United Nations investment plan to support national and regional initiatives in the Sahel. The Deputy Secretary-General also explained broader coordination efforts with other regional and international partners, including the African Union, the G-5 Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, ECOWAS and the European Union.

24. On 27 November, the Commission used its platform, with the consent of the States of the Great Lakes region, to raise awareness of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016–2017. The Commission was briefed by the Special Envoy

of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the former Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, representatives of the United Nations Development Group and the World Bank, and the Permanent Representative of the Congo to the United Nations, as current Chair of the Conference. The meeting showcased the Commission's convening role in bringing together the United Nations, relevant regional organizations and international financial institutions with the core countries of the region. A number of speakers raised awareness of the importance of an integrated regional peace and security, humanitarian and development approach to addressing the root causes of conflict. The meeting also highlighted the complementarity of United Nations and World Bank investments in the region and, as a result, strengthened efforts to achieve a coherent policy approach among actors working across the region. Several Member States also pointed to the need to provide additional support to the Great Lakes cross-border multi-partner trust fund, which had been building on the initial investment of the Peacebuilding Fund, for the Burundi-United Republic of Tanzania cross-border project. The investment highlighted the Fund's expanding support for cross-border projects as well as the increasing linkages between the Commission and the Fund.

Thematic issues

25. In 2017, the Commission benefited from the support of Member States informally acting as focal points. That support contributed to the Commission's work relating to the thematic issues identified below.

National ownership

26. Throughout 2017, the Commission continued to promote the pivotal importance of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding efforts, which are factors essential for their success. This was confirmed, inter alia, during the discussion on Colombia, which reaffirmed the validity of the twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. While national Governments and authorities bore primary responsibility for identifying, driving and directing priorities, strategies and activities, the responsibility for sustained peace was broadly shared among all national stakeholders.

Gender

27. During the reporting period, the Commission continued the implementation of its gender strategy, adopted in 2016. The Chairs of the country configurations routinely met with women leaders during their missions to the field. Substantive inputs to the Commission were circulated in advance of its annual session, advocating increased attention to gender issues during the discussions. Throughout the discussions on the closure of UNMIL, the Commission ensured consistent attention to women's concerns and priorities in the context of the transition in Liberia.

Youth

28. In their discussion on regional or country-specific situations, several Commission members repeatedly stressed the relevance of including young people in peacebuilding strategies. Furthermore, a thematic meeting on youth, peace and security was organized in June 2017 to brief the experts of the Commission on the progress study on the positive contribution of youth to peace processes and conflict resolution, mandated by the Security Council in its resolution 2250 (2015), and its emerging key messages. The lead author of the study, who had been appointed by the Secretary-General, explained that the study had been an opportunity to think tactically about how to invest in the positive contributions of young people as part of a prevention approach. The vast majority of young people did not engage in violence,

but the recognition of their positive contribution and investment in their work remained limited, which called for a shift in the way that Governments and the international community engaged with the youth population. A number of Member States highlighted that young people were vital in addressing the vulnerabilities in conflict-affected countries and fostering resilience to violent extremism, and that these discussions were important for Member States in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Some also pointed out that young women and men were facilitators of peace and security and should be fully integrated into the political, economic, social and cultural spheres in their countries.

Financing

29. Following the deliberations of the Commission's annual session in June 2017, on 13 October the Commission convened a meeting to discuss innovative financing. Members noted that for the United Nations, innovative financing had two objectives: first, it could increase resources for the Organization's financial instruments focused on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, which currently relied solely on voluntary contributions from Member States; and second, it could unlock, where relevant, private sector resources to support peacebuilding at the national level. In the past few decades, the composition of financial flows to conflict-affected countries had changed significantly. Official development assistance was highest during conflict, but, as peace became sustainable, foreign direct investment and national financial resources increased as a percentage of financial flows. Member States should consider developing policies and strategies that supported this needed change in the financing mix. The importance of including South-South and triangular cooperation was also highlighted. It was observed that the Commission could be an avenue for exploring opportunities to work with the private sector by taking into account potential sensitivities, especially in country-specific contexts.

30. Financing was also an important element of the Commission's discussion on situations in transition. The resource and expertise "cliff" created by the closure of long-standing peacekeeping operations had had a negative impact on the ability of Governments and the international community to sustain gains made and prevent relapses into violence. In the case of Liberia, with the closure of UNMIL in March 2018, there was an urgent need to secure predictable sources of financing to support priority areas outlined in the peacebuilding plan for that country. On 27 June, the Chair of the Liberia configuration made a statement to the Council on the urgent need to safeguard the investment made in consolidating peace in Liberia through peacekeeping, and to secure reliable funding. The Commission provided a platform for the United Nations leadership in Liberia to present and discuss with Member States a mapping exercise identifying the financing and expertise gaps that would result from the closure of UNMIL. Subsequently, the Commission supported the establishment of the multi-partner trust fund for the Liberia transition, which will be a time-bound mechanism for securing predictable funding for the United Nations system and partners after the Mission's closure. It is hoped that the trust fund will mobilize an estimated $130 million over three years.

Institution-building

31. The importance of better addressing the root causes of conflict and supporting institution-building in countries affected by conflict, while fully respecting the ownership of national Governments in that regard, was highlighted throughout 2017, including the establishment of sound institutions to address cross-border issues such as border control in the Sahel and the strengthening of criminal justice systems in post-conflict countries such as Guinea.

B. Towards a more flexible and effective Peacebuilding Commission

The bridging role of the Peacebuilding Commission: the work of the Commission with the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council

32. The resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture call on the Commission to serve as a bridge among the principal organs and relevant entities of the United Nations. In that connection, throughout its eleventh session, the Commission continued to explore ways to enhance its advisory role with respect to the General Assembly and the Security Council and its bridging role between the Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The first opportunity to do so was a high-level dialogue organized by the President of the General Assembly on 24 January 2017, which brought together, inter alia, the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission.

33. In relation to the Security Council, the Commission fulfilled its advisory functions through: (a) an annual informal interactive dialogue co-organized by the President of the Council and the Chair of the Commission; (b) periodic stocktaking at the expert level; and (c) formal briefings to the Council on country-specific and thematic issues. The annual informal interactive dialogue, held on 19 June 2017, offered an opportunity to discuss practical ways to strengthen coordination, coherence and cooperation between the Council and the Commission. The dialogue represented an opportunity to take stock of the work of the Commission in response to the Council's presidential statement of 20 January 2017 (S/PRST/2017/2), which emphasized the importance of the convening role of the Commission in peacebuilding efforts, and thus in mobilizing deeper commitment and partnership between the United Nations system, the countries of the Sahel and other international and regional partners with a view to advancing the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel in collaboration with UNOWAS. A number of participants pointed out that the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin faced complex and multidimensional challenges that touched upon not only political and security dimensions, but also humanitarian and development dimensions. These included transnational and cross-border challenges such as terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, illicit trafficking and other transnational crimes, weak institutions, climate change, migration and the displacement of populations. It was noted that those challenges and root causes of crisis in the region could be addressed by strengthening partnership with national authorities in the area of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with the assistance of the international community. In that connection, the Commission, by virtue of its unique role, could bring together the countries concerned, United Nations actors, regional and subregional organizations and international financial institutions. Discussions also highlighted how the United Nations system could use its capacity in addressing cross-border challenges and how, in that regard, the Peacebuilding Fund was one of the few mechanisms of the United Nations to undertake cross-border programming.

34. Two informal expert-level meetings were held, on 21 April and 30 November, to focus on the advisory role of the Commission in connection with country-specific issues and with regard to the Sahel. The discussions highlighted how the Commission could assist UNOWAS in implementing the integrated strategy and support the Security Council discussions on the drawdown of UNMIL. A number of good practices that could strengthen the advisory role of the Commission were also discussed, with focus placed on its advisory role in connection with the situations in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia; on the establishment and maintenance of strong partnerships with regional organizations;

and on the structuring and planning of its work in a way that would enrich its advice to the Council.

35. With regard to country-specific briefings to the Security Council, the Chairs of the country configurations provided the Council with substantive updates on key peacebuilding priorities defined by the countries concerned. The Chair of the Burundi configuration kept the Council apprised of the socioeconomic challenges in that country and his efforts to support dialogue between Burundi and its partners on four occasions. In August, the Council, in a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/13), welcomed this active engagement of the Commission, particularly the socioeconomic retreat held in Bujumbura in July. With respect to the Central African Republic, in July the Chair of the configuration, following his visit to the country, drew the Council's attention to the risk of escalation of the sectarian violence based on the situation in Bangassou. He recommended that the Council factor that risk into the process of renewing the mandate of MINUSCA. In connection with Guinea-Bissau, the Commission continued its advocacy of strong support for the ECOWAS-led process for finding a peaceful solution to the political crisis in the country. Regarding Liberia, the Commission provided active support for the development of the peacebuilding plan mandated by the Council in its resolution 2333 (2016). In addition, the Chair of the Liberia configuration called the attention of Council members to the urgent need to secure reliable funding for the United Nations transition after the drawdown of UNMIL.

36. During a meeting on the theme "Building synergies for peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Africa: how can the United Nations and the African Union and its regional mechanisms enhance their strategic partnership?", jointly organized on 26 April by the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, several members pointed out the relevance of the Commission in enhancing synergies among the United Nations, the African Union and subregional organizations.

37. In relation to the Economic and Social Council, as indicated above, a joint meeting with the Commission was held on 28 June to discuss the situation in the Sahel. The event was focused on the multidimensional challenges in the Sahel and addressing the root causes of conflict pertaining to the social, economic and environmental factors in the region.

38. On 25 July, the Chair of the Commission was invited to brief the Economic and Social Council at its coordination and management meeting. The Chair underscored the importance of a multidimensional approach that went beyond security responses, referring to the joint meeting between the Commission and the Council held on 28 June. Building on the good practices of the Commission, the Chair underscored the importance of a number of principles that were guiding the work of the Commission, such as respect for national ownership, the fact that security, development and human rights were closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing, the importance of ensuring an appropriate level of support for conflict-affected countries and countries undergoing transition, and the gender dimension of peacebuilding.

Contributing to United Nations system-wide coherence

39. On 28 September, the Commission convened a meeting to hear a briefing by the Secretary-General on the ongoing reform processes in the United Nations, and how these related to the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. The meeting provided an opportunity for Member States to discuss, inter alia, the contribution of the Commission to the strengthening of United Nations coherence. The Secretary-General noted that the Commission, as an advisory body with respect

to both the General Assembly and the Security Council, had an important role to play in bridging and enhancing coherence with those two bodies. He added that a strengthened Commission would support change in the way that business was conducted in the Secretariat. A number of delegations pointed out the importance of preserving unchanged the established mandates of United Nations bodies as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Some of them noted that the Commission, through its bridging role and convening power, had an important role in the implementation of the review processes. Several Member States also reaffirmed the importance of revitalizing the Peacebuilding Support Office, including in the areas of resource mobilization, peacebuilding partnerships and enhanced support for the Commission.

40. The importance of strengthening coordination and coherence within the United Nations also emerged as a key outcome of the informal retreat of the Commission organized on 16 and 17 November by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the Peacebuilding Support Office. At the retreat, members of the Commission had the opportunity to informally discuss the main elements of the upcoming report of the Secretary-General mandated by the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture.

41. The Commission continued to support efforts aimed at United Nations inter-agency cooperation and coherence, including at the country level. In Burundi, for example, the United Nations country team and the Chair of the configuration jointly participated in two round-table consultations with the Government on the socioeconomic situation. Those discussions helped to strengthen the policy and programmatic coherence of the country team in terms of addressing the socioeconomic impact of the crisis and contributed to a United Nations country team resilience strategy for Burundi. Some delegations suggested that the resident coordinators be invited more systematically to meetings of the Commission when their respective countries of residence were being discussed.

Fostering partnerships

42. Throughout the eleventh session, the Commission worked to strengthen partnerships with a number of relevant actors. In connection with the partnership with the World Bank, on 5 June the Chair and a number of other members of the Commission met in Washington, D.C., with the leadership of the World Bank, including the President, Vice-Presidents and members of the Executive Board. The objective of the meeting was threefold: (a) to establish a closer working relationship between the Commission and the Bank, in the context of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture and the updated United Nations-World Bank partnership framework signed on 22 April 2017; (b) to identify and deepen collaboration with the World Bank on country-specific situations under consideration by the Commission; and (c) to discuss ways to promote an institutional partnership between the World Bank and the Commission. Participants agreed that the visit had laid a solid foundation for scaling up closer collaboration between the Bank and the Commission. The importance of the assistance of the private sector, where relevant, was pointed out.

43. On 11 April, the Commission convened an expert-level meeting to discuss the initial findings of the United Nations-World Bank study entitled "Pathways for peace: inclusive approaches to preventing violent conflict". During the discussion, which benefited from briefings by senior officials of the United Nations and the World Bank, several Member States highlighted the importance of comprehensive and coherent approaches to addressing the root causes of violent conflicts and the centrality of a strong partnership between the United Nations and the World Bank in that regard.

44. On 30 June, the Commission convened its fourth annual session to discuss the topic "Partnerships for financing for peace". The meeting was an opportunity for the Commission to bring together Member States and partners, including the United Nations system, international financial institutions, regional organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, to discuss ways to work together in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The discussions benefited from an interactive session with the Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations and the Chief Executive Officer of the World Bank, as well as from presentations made by senior government representatives, senior officials of the United Nations and representatives of civil society organizations.

45. During the opening session, the Commission and the World Bank issued a joint statement reaffirming the importance of continued attention to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and decided to hold an annual dialogue between the members of the Peacebuilding Commission and senior representatives of the World Bank, including members of its Executive Board, with a view to strengthening the partnership and discussing issues of mutual concern, including how development approaches could complement peacebuilding efforts at the regional and country levels.

46. Throughout the discussion, participants recognized that adequate financing for peacebuilding and sustaining peace would require strengthened partnerships and the alignment of financial flows. Partnerships among multilateral organizations were highlighted as a core component of increasing complementarity and building the right capacities in the right places. In addition, several participants underscored the relevance of the private sector, which was emphasized as the place where the reintegration of ex-combatants occurred, as well as the integration of displaced victims of violence. Given the role of the private sector, where relevant, in peacebuilding, business acumen and business education were highlighted as important foundations in that regard.

47. The Commission continued to strengthen its partnerships through its country-specific work. With regard to Liberia, in support of the peacebuilding plan, the Commission engaged the High-level Advisory Group, which it co-chairs with UNDP. A small team of experts was dispatched to Monrovia in early February to work with the Government of Liberia and UNMIL during the first round of consultations on the document, including with political parties and civil society. In that context, the recovery and peacebuilding assessment, a planning methodology based on the 2008 Joint Declaration on Post-Crisis Assessments and Recovery Planning signed by the United Nations Development Group, the World Bank and the European Commission, was activated to support the Government in developing the peacebuilding plan.

48. In respect of Guinea-Bissau, one of the key priorities for the Commission in 2017 was to strengthen coordination with the relevant regional and international partners with a view to supporting the country's peacebuilding efforts. The objective was to increase synergies and complementarities that would be beneficial for an effective peacebuilding endeavour in Guinea-Bissau. A key element was the active engagement and support of the Commission with respect to the framework of the "Guinea-Bissau P5".

49. The resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture stress the importance of partnerships and cooperation between the United Nations and relevant regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, to improve cooperation and coordination in peacebuilding, increase synergies and ensure the coherence and complementarity of such efforts. The resolutions also urge the Peacebuilding Commission to hold regular exchanges of views with relevant regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union. In that connection, following up on a visit to the headquarters of the African Union in 2016, the then-

Chair led a delegation of the Commission to Addis Ababa from 6 to 8 December 2017 to discuss ways to enhance the cooperation between the Commission and the African Union, focusing on the countries and regions being considered by the Commission. The Chair was accompanied by a Vice-Chair (Kenya), the Chair of the Central African Republic configuration and Ambassadors representing countries that had engaged with the Commission throughout the year, including Burundi, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support also accompanied the delegation.

50. The delegation also held a meeting with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on 7 December. On the margins of the meeting, the delegation also met with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union. Those meetings provided additional opportunities for the Commission to further strengthen its engagement with the African Union in terms of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the countries and regions being considered by the Commission. They underlined the need for the United Nations and the African Union to enhance their coordination so as to better address the root causes of conflict and support institution-building in Africa.

51. On 7 and 8 November in Seoul, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, in its capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and in partnership with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the Peacebuilding Support Office, organized an Asian conference on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The conference represented an opportunity to raise awareness with respect to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Asia. Speakers, who included representatives of Member States, academia, civil society and the United Nations, underscored, inter alia, the universality of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the importance of fostering strong partnerships in support of conflict-affected countries, the primacy of politics and the necessity of ensuring that national ownership was respected. Invited participants, mostly from countries members of the Commission and Asian countries, welcomed the opportunity to exchange views on peacebuilding issues and to share experiences relating to peacebuilding in such countries as Cambodia, Colombia, the Gambia, Nepal, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka. Several participants also referred to the important role of the Commission as an intergovernmental platform for policy-related discussions and to the Peacebuilding Fund as a financial instrument to build and sustain peace.

Strengthening synergies between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund

52. In implementation of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, and building on its previous work, the Commission continued to strengthen synergies with the Peacebuilding Fund by ensuring an improved flow of information from the Fund to the Commission in three ways: (a) inviting the Peacebuilding Support Office to provide updates on the work of the Fund at regional and country-specific meetings of the Commission; (b) inviting the Chair and members of the Advisory Group of the Fund to brief the Commission on the findings resulting from the meetings of the Group; and (c) inviting countries that are receiving financing from the Fund, in particular countries declared eligible by the Secretary-General, to brief the Commission on their peacebuilding priorities, progress and challenges.

Rules of procedure and working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission

53. In implementation of paragraph 5 of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, the Commission continued the review of its provisional rules of procedure and working methods that it had initiated at its tenth session, in

order to make its work more flexible and effective. In that connection, the Commission, building on the recommendations contained in the annex to its report on its tenth session (A/71/768-S/2017/76), convened a number of expert-level consultations, which culminated in a document that it informally adopted on 18 December (see the annex to the present report) to guide its work.

III. Conclusions and agenda going forward

54. The next reporting period will present another important opportunity for the Commission to implement the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. In that regard, the Commission will continue to pursue several important work streams that could further strengthen its country-specific and policy-related engagements.

A. Implementation of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture

55. The Peacebuilding Commission, together with the Peacebuilding Support Office, will continue to implement the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, in addition to the actions identified under each of the strategic priorities identified below.

Action:

(a) The Organizational Committee will convene periodic discussions to ensure the implementation of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture;

(b) The country configurations will implement the relevant recommendations of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture.

B. The bridging role of the Peacebuilding Commission: the work of the Commission with the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council

56. The Commission will explore concrete ways to further strengthen its role as a bridge among the principal organs and relevant United Nations entities.

Action:

(a) The Chair will consult with the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council and the President of the Economic and Social Council on ways to strengthen synergies between their respective bodies and the Commission;

(b) The Chair will consult with the President of the General Assembly in preparation for activities that can feed into the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, to be convened in 2018 in accordance with the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture;

(c) The Organizational Committee will draw upon the main findings of the stocktaking exercise, undertaken in 2017, of its advisory function with regard to the Security Council and consider practical ways to implement them; to that end, the Committee will nominate one of the members of the Commission to coordinate the periodic stocktaking exercise in an inclusive manner;

(d) The Chair will coordinate with the presidency of the Security Council to prepare for the convening of informal interactive dialogues;

(e) The Chair will consult with the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa to explore ways to enhance an informal exchange of views on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with a focus on Africa;

(f) The Chair will coordinate with the presidency of the Economic and Social Council in preparation for the convening of a joint event, which may be held in conjunction with the upcoming annual session of the Commission;

(g) The Chair of the Commission and the Chairs of relevant country configurations will continue to ensure that, at the request of the Security Council, their periodic formal briefings to the Council on the countries concerned will be synchronized with the timing of their field visits and will be focused on specific areas to which the Council's attention has been drawn.

C. Partnerships and engagement with other stakeholders

57. The follow-up to the fourth annual session of the Commission will be carried out in 2018. The follow-up exercise will provide guidance to the Commission in its preparations for the fifth annual session, including the selection of a theme that would help elaborate the identified policy areas requiring further development. In that regard, the Commission will strengthen its collaboration with international financial institutions, regional organizations and, where relevant, the private sector.

Action:

(a) The Organizational Committee will convene informal discussions with the participation of relevant United Nations entities, international financial institutions, regional organizations and development banks, with the aim of exploring those specific policy areas requiring further elaboration during the fourth annual session. Interested States Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Peacebuilding Commission will also be invited;

(b) The Organizational Committee will coordinate with the World Bank on ways to strengthen collaboration between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Bank, including by implementing the recommendations of the joint statement issued by the Commission and the Bank on 30 June 2017.

D. Towards a more flexible Peacebuilding Commission

58. The Commission will continue to consider diversifying its working methods to enhance its efficiency and flexibility in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Action:

(a) The Organizational Committee will continue to provide a platform to countries, at their request, that are receiving funds from the Peacebuilding Fund, in particular those that are declared eligible by the Secretary-General to share their peacebuilding experiences and challenges;

(b) The Organizational Committee will continue its consideration of regional and subregional dimensions of peacebuilding, with the consent of all countries concerned;

(c) The Organizational Committee will implement its gender strategy, where relevant, in accordance with the modalities indicated in the strategy;

(d) The Organizational Committee will continue its consideration of the provisional rules of procedure and working methods of Commission. The Committee will report on the progress made in the improvement of the Commission's working methods in its next annual report.

E. Financing for peacebuilding: strengthening the synergies between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund

59. The Commission will continue to discuss ways to create stronger synergies between the Commission and the Fund.

Action:

The Organizational Committee, with a view to ensuring that it is constantly informed of the activities of the Peacebuilding Fund, will convene periodic meetings with the Peacebuilding Support Office or with members of the Advisory Group of the Fund.

Annex

Working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission

The present document contains recommendations whose objectives and outcomes have been established as good practices, and that can be addressed through an informal process. These recommendations are accompanied by relevant examples. It also includes additional action areas whose implementation can contribute to the efficiency and flexibility of the Commission. The Commission can implement all of these actions without the need to amend its provisional rules of procedure and within the mandate of the founding resolutions of the Commission, General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), as well as Assembly resolution 70/262 and Council resolution 2282 (2016). The review of the Commission's working methods is an ongoing process, and this informal document will be reviewed periodically, through the Commission's annual reports, in order to assess the added value of the recommendations to the work of the Commission.

Recommendations

1. **Leadership**: The Commission should improve the continuity of its Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

Action:

I. As mandated by paragraph 5 of both General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), which encourage the Commission to improve the continuity of its Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and building upon the established practice of having the outgoing Chair serve as Vice-Chair, thus ensuring continuity and support to its leadership, the Commission will continue to explore ways to further strengthen the continuity of its Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Any informal arrangement will not prejudge the change in the membership of the Commission, which takes place every two years and will operate within regional rotation of Chairs, as spelled out in annex I of the Commission's provisional rules of procedure. The decision to endorse a candidate for each post remains a prerogative of the respective regional groups, for action by the Organizational Committee.

II. Make greater use of the Vice-Chairs, in consultation with the Chair, in the organization and conduct of Peacebuilding Commission meetings.

Good practices: over the past few sessions, the outgoing Chair served as Vice-Chair, thus ensuring continuity and support to the incoming Chair. Vice-Chairs supported the Chair by presiding over a number of thematic discussions.

2. **Forms of engagement of the Commission**: while recognizing the value of the work done by the Commission, including through country-specific configurations, the Commission should consider flexible options for other forms of engagement, including a more engaged role of the Organizational Committee.

Actions:

I. Make greater use of the Organizational Committee as a platform to convene country-specific, regional and thematic discussions, with the consent of all countries concerned, in accordance with its founding resolutions. When convening regional discussions, references to country-specific situations shall be made with the consent of those countries, which shall be shared with the Members of the Committee.

II. Promote a Commission that can work in a form of "variable geometry", where the character, focus and duration of its engagement are decided on an ad hoc basis in order to strengthen its efficiency and flexibility, including with the countries partnering with the Commission.

Good practices: the meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission on Burkina Faso, Colombia, the Gambia, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka; the regional discussions on West Africa, the Sahel and the Great Lakes; and the thematic discussions on financing for peacebuilding, which included Papua New Guinea, Somalia and Kyrgyzstan.

3. **Role of the membership**: the Commission has a very diverse membership, bringing together seven members from the General Assembly, seven members from the Security Council, seven members from the Economic and Social Council, five members from the top troop-contributing countries and five members from the top financial contributors. Therefore, a stronger engagement of all members of the Commission will further enhance its efficiency.

Actions:

I. Make greater use of the perspectives of the organs that elect or designate the members of the Commission: in addition to country-specific interests, Member States elected by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council are encouraged to bring perspectives of those bodies into the deliberations of the Commission. For example, members can offer advice on the working methods of their constituencies and can highlight relevant ongoing thematic issues in their respective organs that will add value to the work of the Commission and reinforce synergies between the Commission and the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the relevant subsidiary bodies, while respecting the mandate of each body.

II. Members are encouraged to report back to their constituencies on the work done by the Peacebuilding Commission on priority areas that are relevant for the work of their respective organs or groups, and to advocate peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This will add to the visibility of the Commission and enhance clarity on the work of the Commission. Similarly, establishing a predictable workplan (see action 3 below) and summarizing results on a regular basis can lead to a more regular flow of information between the Commission and the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

III. Members of the Commission are encouraged to actively engage and support the work of the Chair and the Vice-Chairs, while avoiding duplication of work and enhancing the idea of one Peacebuilding Commission.

IV. The Chair, with the consent of Member States, including those being considered by the Commission, should enhance the convening platform of the Commission by inviting additional partners to participate in meetings of the Commission. Such partners may include Member States that are not members of the Organizational Committee, representatives of relevant entities of the United Nations system, international financial institutions, regional and subregional organizations, civil society organizations, including youth and women's organizations, and, where relevant, the private sector.

Good practices: the annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission is a good example of how the Commission has brought together various partners from the United Nations system and beyond, including representatives of civil society. Discussions pertaining to the regional dimensions of peacebuilding, as well as country-specific and thematic discussions, such as the informal meeting on good practices in transition with Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone and the meetings on Colombia, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka, included representatives of relevant United Nations departments and of civil society organizations. Member States made efforts to support the Chair by taking the lead on various thematic issues to foster greater knowledge and engagement by the Commission's membership, acting as focal points on issues such as financing for peacebuilding, gender, institution-building, national ownership and youth.

4. **Workplan**: a more predictable and longer-term workplan that would allow broader participation of Member States at the meetings of the Commission.

Actions:

I. The Commission is to adopt an annual workplan based on the forward agenda contained in the Commission's annual report. The workplan is to be further developed and, in accordance with the current practice, circulated for consideration by the Organizational Committee on a quarterly basis and, on a monthly basis, listing the dates of meetings, activities and visits of the Commission in all its configurations. Additional previously unscheduled meetings to be added, if required.

II. The workplan is to take into account the relevant calendar of work of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, particularly when it comes to activities where the advisory role of the Commission may be sought. In such cases, the Commission should organize its workplan in a way that strengthens its advisory role.

III. The Chairs of country configurations are to present their calendar of work earlier in the beginning of each quarter.

IV. The workplan is to include a more regularized engagement of the Commission with regional and subregional organizations.

Good practices: the forward agenda of the annual reports of the Commission has been useful in guiding the work of the Commission. Following the Chair's visit to Addis Ababa from 17 to 19 October 2016, the Commission held discussions on the African Union's recommendations for holding annual meetings and organizing joint field visits. The quarterly and monthly workplans of the Commission have been useful tools to better align the work of the Commission with the calendar of the Security Council and to facilitate Member States' engagement with the Commission.

5. **Bridging role**: resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016) stress the importance of the Commission in promoting an integrated, strategic and coherent approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and, inter alia, in serving a bridging role among the principal organs and relevant United Nations entities. The resolutions also recognize that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

Actions:

I. The Commission is to better utilize its membership to strengthen its links with the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council (see also actions 2.I and 2.II) to efficiently address

issues regarding peacebuilding and sustaining peace and to advocate peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

II. In connection with the Commission's advisory role to the Security Council, in addition to its engagement so far, when invited to brief the Council it should prepare its briefings by aligning its workplan with relevant Security Council meetings (see action 3.II). The activities of the Commission in preparation for these briefings may include internal thematic discussions in anticipation of issues to be discussed in the Security Council, visits to the field, including, when invited by the Council, joint visits with the Council to advance peacebuilding perspectives and the organization of meetings to engage with relevant stakeholders, including international financial institutions, United Nations entities and civil society organizations.

III. Through this advanced preparation, and the uniqueness of the Commission's convening power, it can have sustained interactions and enhance its efforts to provide the Security Council with substantive advice, upon request, for example, in matters relating to the synergies between security and development. Similarly, regular exchanges between the Commission and other subsidiary organs of the Council should be further enhanced.

Good practices: the meetings of the Commission with the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa in 2016 represented good opportunities to exchange views on issues pertaining to peacebuilding in Africa. Furthermore, the participation of the Chair of the Commission in the high-level dialogue of the President of the General Assembly, the fifth informal interactive dialogue between the members of the Security Council and the Commission (June 2017), the Commission's advisory role to the Security Council, and the Commission's joint event with the Economic and Social Council (June 2017) were examples of how the Commission can implement its mandate to play a bridging role among relevant United Nations bodies.

IV. The Commission is to advocate a coherent and predictable use of resources for peacebuilding activities, including with international financial institutions, and for innovative financial instruments.

6. **Synergies between the Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund**: while preserving the independence of the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, look at ways to strengthen the synergies between the Commission and the Fund, and to ensure that Member States remain informed on the ongoing projects of the Fund.

Actions:

I. The Peacebuilding Commission is to hear presentations by countries receiving funds from the Peacebuilding Fund, in particular when peacebuilding priority plans are discussed.

II. The Commission is to invite the Chair and the members of the Advisory Group of the Peacebuilding Fund to meetings of the Commission, when relevant.

III. Regular briefings by the Peacebuilding Support Office on the activities of the Fund at the meetings of the Commission would be useful.

Good practices: the working relationship between the Commission and the Fund during the Ebola crisis; the meetings on financing for peacebuilding (Papua New Guinea and Somalia, in 2015; Kyrgyzstan, in 2016, which also included a representative from the Fund's Advisory Group); and the discussion on Solomon

Islands represent innovative ways to keep the Commission informed of progress that countries make with support from the Fund.

7. **Format of Commission meetings (open or closed)**: ensure that there is a balance between transparency/outreach and confidentiality of the Commission's deliberations. The Commission, in all its meetings and formats, and with the consent of Member States, should enhance inclusivity and ensure that participation reinforces an integrated Organizational Committee and the concept of a unified Peacebuilding Commission. The Peacebuilding Support Office is to continue ensuring that mechanisms of reporting back to the Organizational Committee on all Commission activities are in place.

Actions:

I. In preparation for the meetings of the Commission, the Chair, upon consultation with the countries concerned, should announce whether the meetings are to be open or closed.

8. **Visibility and communication**: there is a need to address the lack of awareness, both within and outside the United Nations, about the work of the Commission and on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Actions:

I. The Commission is to explore ways to increase the visibility of its open meetings, in particular high-level events such as the annual session, to attract more attention from the media.

II. The Commission is to explore ways to increase ongoing activity on the web and on social media with regard to all of its meetings and country visits.

United Nations A/72/722–S/2018/78

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Security Council

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General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 72 (c)
Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 26 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a comment by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, dated 24 January 2018, regarding unlawful actions against citizens of Ukraine who have been illegally transferred from the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea to the Russian Federation (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 72 (c), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-01529 (E) 050218

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Annex to the letter dated 26 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Comment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, dated 24 January 2018, regarding unlawful actions against citizens of Ukraine who have been illegally transferred from the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea to the Russian Federation

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine demands that the Russian Federation immediately stop its unlawful actions against citizens of Ukraine who have been illegally transferred from the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea to the Russian Federation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine strongly protests against the unlawful and inhumane actions of the Russian side against the following citizens of Ukraine: Muslim Aliyev, Emir-Usayin Kuku, Vadym Siruk, Enver Bekirov, Refat Alimov and Arsen Dzhepparov, who have been illegally transferred from the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea to the Russian Federation following a fabricated criminal case brought against them before the Severnokavkazsky District Military Court.

All lawful petitions filed by the defence during the today's preliminary hearing have been rejected without any legal grounds, which points to the court's unjust and biased attitude.

According to defendants, they have been treated in an inhumane and humiliating manner, diminishing their human dignity, and have experienced repeated beatings, discrimination by nationality and psychological pressure while being transferred from the territory of the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation.

The Ukrainian side considers such actions as a deliberate neglect by the Kremlin of its international obligations, in particular those enshrined in the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

We urge the aggressor State to put an immediate end to the farcical, unlawful trial of the Ukrainian citizens listed above and to take all necessary and comprehensive measures to restore their rights.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine calls on the world community to publicly condemn the occupying country and to compel it to stop committing crimes against the inalienable fundamental human rights of the population living in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

United Nations A/72/723–S/2018/81

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Security Council

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General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 65
Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 31 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 31 January 2018 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ri Yong Ho (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 65, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ja** Song Nam
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-01609 (E) 080218

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Annex to the letter dated 31 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

(*Translation*)

Pyongyang, 31 January, Juche 107(2018)

I address this letter to you with respect to emerging dangerous military moves antithetical to the positive changes leading to the improvement of inter-Korean relations and easing of tension now being manifested on the Korean Peninsula.

The fact that a dramatic turning point has been made for peace and stability, national reconciliation and cooperation and reunification on the Korean Peninsula, where a touch-and-go war danger was prevailing, is entirely thanks to the noble love for the nation by the respected Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Comrade Kim Jong Un, his will for reunification based on devotion to the country and people and his great and courageous determination to safeguard peace.

Owing to our magnanimous initiative, good results are borne in the inter-Korean dialogue, thus giving joy to all fellow countrymen, and a positive atmosphere in favour of improving inter-Korean relations is created, and the international society warmly welcomes and supports this development and looks forward to seeing continued easing of tension on the Korean Peninsula.

However, the United States authorities are misleading public opinion, as if the inter-Korean dialogue is an outcome of their harshest sanctions and pressure imposed upon our country, and seeking to intentionally aggravate the situation by introducing strategic assets, including nuclear-powered aircraft carrier strike groups, into the vicinity of the Korean Peninsula at a time when north and south of Korea are charting a course of peace together.

In view of its nature and contents, scope of troops and war equipment being introduced, the United States current moves of military reinforcements are designed to make a pre-emptive strike against the DPRK, and this is a primary factor which would block the inter-Korean reconciliation process and drive the situation of the Korean Peninsula into an unpredictable dangerous phase.

On the other hand, the United States is openly stating that it will conduct a large-scale aggressive joint military exercise against the DPRK immediately after the Winter Olympic Games.

It is a fact acknowledged by the whole world that, whenever joint military exercises took place, the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula were gravely threatened and inter-Korean mistrust and confrontation reached the top, thus creating great difficulties and obstacles ahead of hard-won dialogues.

We will make every effort to improve inter-Korean relations in the future too, but never sit idle with regard to the sinister act of throwing a wet blanket over our efforts.

In case the hard-won atmosphere in favour of improving inter-Korean relations and easing tensions is undermined owing to the United States manoeuvres aggravating the situation by introducing nuclear war equipment in and around the Korean Peninsula, the United States would never escape from that responsibility.

As a matter of course, the United Nations should not keep silent as to the United States dangerous game of aggravating the situation in and around the Korean Peninsula and driving the whole world into a possible disaster of nuclear war.

I express my expectation that you will pay serious attention to the United States deployment of nuclear war equipment and its manoeuvres to provoke a nuclear war, which will undermine the improvement of inter-Korean relations and the easing of tensions, and to exerting all your efforts to completely terminate these manoeuvres, in line with your mission as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations.

And, as an immediate step forward, I would like to request you to take up with the Security Council, in line with rule 6 of its provisional rules of procedure, the issue of welcoming the process of improved inter-Korean relations and discouraging the neighbouring countries from disturbing the process.

(*Signed*) **Ri** Yong Ho
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Democratic People's Republic of Korea

United Nations A/72/724–S/2018/74

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Security Council

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General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 35
Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 30 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the opening of so-called customs points in the occupied regions of Georgia, dated 27 January 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kaha **Imnadze**
Permanent Representative

18-01532 (E) 050218

Please recycle

Annex to the identical letters dated 30 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the opening of so-called customs points in the occupied regions of Georgia

27 January 2018

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemns the opening of customs points in the occupied regions of Georgia, namely the opening of so called customs point in Akhalgori by Russian occupation regime and creation of so called specialized customs post in Sokhumi by the Russian Federation, which are aimed at integration of occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions within the customs sphere of the Russian Federation and represents another illegal step towards factual annexation of these regions by the Russian Federation.

Alongside the opening of so called custom point in Akhalgori, bringing of meat and dairy products from the rest of Georgia into the occupied Tskhinvali region was banned, which even more aggravates the dire humanitarian situation of the local population, restricts their freedom of movement and blatantly violates their fundamental rights.

Against the background of building the barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers along the occupation line, closure of so called crossing points, and introduction of various discriminatory regulations aimed at restricting the freedom of movement, the opening of so called customs points represents a part of Moscow's policy of integration of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions into Russia's system, including the customs-economics sphere through implementation of so called treaties and isolation of these regions from the rest of Georgia.

It is worth to note that with this kind of destructive actions the Russian Federation deliberately attempts to hamper the efforts of Georgia and international society for peaceful conflict resolution and engagement between the communities divided by the occupation line.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs calls upon the Russian Federation to cease the provocative actions against the Georgian statehood, abide by its international commitments, de-occupy Georgia's territories and take steps aimed at peaceful conflict resolution in accordance to the principles of international law.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia appeals to the international community to give due assessment to Russia's aggressive policy and take effective measures against the steps towards factual annexation of the territories of the sovereign state.

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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Letter dated 30 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to draw your attention to the speech given by President Serzh Sargsyan of the Republic of Armenia to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 24 January 2018 in Strasbourg, France.

In your statement of 16 October 2017, you encouraged the sides to build on the positive momentum created by the summit held earlier the same day in Geneva between the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia to reach a peaceful negotiated settlement of the conflict between the two countries.

However, this speech, full of the standard set of misinterpretations and falsifications, delivered immediately after the meeting between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Azerbaijan on 18 January 2018 in Krakow, Poland, and just few days before the next visit of the Co-chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to the region, demonstrated the unwillingness of the Government of Armenia to comply with the generally accepted norms and principles of international law and engage in good faith in ongoing efforts towards the earliest resolution of the conflict.

By resorting to fake historical narratives and fallacious legalistic arguments, Armenia has once again attempted to mislead the international community in order to conceal its policy of aggression and atrocious crimes against Azerbaijan and its people.

Proceeding from the importance of addressing the root causes of the conflict and their implications for regional peace and security and the conflict settlement process, I deem it important to make the following clarifications.

The allegation that the Nagorno-Karabakh region was annexed to Azerbaijan as a result of Stalin's decision is nothing other than a stark example of the blatant

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falsifications frequently resorted to by the Armenian side. The region has always been and will remain an inalienable part of Azerbaijan. The history, which Armenia so desperately tries to manipulate to serve its expansionist aspirations, is definitely not on its side.

It is well known that the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan is part of the geographical area called "Garabagh". The name of that part of the country consists of two Azerbaijani words, *qara* (black) and *bağ* (garden), while "Nagorno-Karabakh" is a Russian translation of the original name in the Azerbaijani language — Dağlıq Qarabağ — which means "mountainous Garabagh".

In his Strasbourg speech, the President of Armenia named the region differently neither more nor less than 25 times. However, such confusing attempts by Armenia to alter the geographical name of a part of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territory are not only preposterous but null and void ab initio. Their invalidity stems from a clear violation of international law, the Constitution and the legislation of Azerbaijan and the principles of and procedures for the international standardization of geographical names established within the United Nations.

Further to historical aspects, the transfer of the Armenians to the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the broader South Caucasus as part of the implementation of the tsarist colonial policy aimed at altering the demographic and territorial structure that existed at the time started in the nineteenth century. Suffice it to refer to a simple example. In 1978, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of their settlement in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the Armenians erected the "Maraga-150" monument there. However, in 1988, immediately after Armenia overtly laid claim to that territory of Azerbaijan, the monument was destroyed. It is not difficult to guess who did this and why.

Imposed demographic changes have laid the basis for long-term instability, tensions and conflicts in the region that continue to date and have been accompanied by massacres and forcible deportations of the Azerbaijani population. The hostilities of 1905 and 1918 claimed the lives of thousands of people. The 31st of March is commemorated as the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis, in memory of those thousands of civilians killed as a result of Armenian offensives in 1918.[1]

Although the Armenian side spares no effort to introduce itself as a victim of discrimination, persecution and injustices carried out during the Soviet period, the reality testifies to the diametrically opposite situation. Thus, over the 70 years of Soviet rule, the territory of Armenia increased from 8,000–10,000 km^2 to 29,800 km^2. As a consequence, in 1920, the western part of the Zangazur region of Azerbaijan was annexed to Armenia, thus cutting off the Nakhchyvan region of Azerbaijan from the rest of the country.

Moreover, the mountainous part of Karabakh was given the status of autonomous oblast in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan in the 1920s. At the same time, the areas in Armenia with a much larger Azerbaijani population, more than half a million, were refused the same status. In the years since, all Azerbaijanis have been forced to leave their homeland in the territory of modern Armenia.

The Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous oblast of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan enjoyed a wide range of rights and privileges. In terms of economic development, the region was second, behind only the capital city of Baku. Overall, it edged out Azerbaijan and Armenia in almost all categories, including in the number of hospital beds, physicians in all specialties, public libraries, schools, preschool

[1] See the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the genocide of Azerbaijanis, issued on 26 March 1998 (A/53/94-S/1998/309).

facilities and other social infrastructure. The Armenian language was widely used in public life and in the work of local authorities. The State Pedagogical Institute has functioned in Khankandi with more than 2,000 students, mostly Armenians.

While expressing his worry about the alleged decline of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh during the Soviet period and introducing it as a consequence of the "Baku policies", the President of Armenia passed in silence over the fact that the population of Armenia itself is continuously declining. Thus, according to the 2017 report of the National Statistics Service of Armenia, the population of Armenia declined from 3,514,900 in 1993 to 2,986,100 in 2017.[2]

As is seen in the information above, Armenia's actions were never peaceful in the past, nor were they peaceful at the end of 1980s, when Armenia resorted to force and violence in an attempt to realize its groundless and illegal territorial claims. Those actions started with the attacks on the Azerbaijani population both in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and in Armenia itself and culminated in brutal killings of thousands of Azerbaijani civilians, the expulsion of about 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes in both Armenia and the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the extensive destruction and pillaging of the seized areas.

The Armenian ideologists and extremist organizations have planned and carried out inter-ethnic disturbances in other parts of Azerbaijan as well, which were necessary to them as a means of launching an extensive anti-Azerbaijani campaign for covering up Armenia's unlawful annexationist intentions and violent methods for their achievement. Thus, for example, during the disturbances in the city of Sumgait, which claimed the lives of 26 Armenians and Azerbaijanis, one of their leading figures was a certain Edward Grigorian, an Armenian and resident of the city. The witnesses, including Armenians, identified Grigorian as one of the organizers and perpetrators of the violence. He was sentenced to long-term imprisonment.

At the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ceased to exist and both Armenia and Azerbaijan attained independence and were accorded international recognition, armed hostilities and attacks against populated areas within Azerbaijan intensified and escalated into a full-fledged inter-State war. As a result, a significant part of Azerbaijan's territory, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the seven adjacent districts (Lachyn, Kalbajar, Zangilan, Gubadly, Jabrayil, parts of Fuzuli and Aghdam) and some exclaves, was occupied by Armenia.

In contradiction to his speech in question, the President of Armenia earlier publicly acknowledged that the war was started by Armenia and that the aim of the war was to fulfil the long-nurtured plan of seizing the territory of Azerbaijan. Moreover, he made it unequivocally clear that during the active military phase of the conflict, it was Armenia that had intentionally ignored the demands of the Security Council for the immediate cessation of all military activities and hostile acts for the purposes of establishing a stable ceasefire. In reality, at the very time when there was a real possibility of halting the bloodshed, saving the lives of thousands of people and investing in development and prosperity, Armenia continued its annexationist policy. Anyone who wishes to be convinced of that may refer to the interview with the incumbent President and then-Minister of Defence of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, conducted by British journalist Thomas de Waal on 15 December 2000.[3]

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[2] See, for example, www.lragir.am/index/eng/0/country/view/37763.

[3] Available in Russian from www.carnegieendowment.org/files/DeVaalinterview_r.pdf.

In addition, the following words of Serzh Sargsyan leave no doubt as to the question of the perpetrator of the massacre against the Azerbaijani population in the town of Khojaly:

> Before Khojalu, the Azerbaijanis thought that they were joking with us, they thought that the Armenians were people who could not raise their hand against the civilian population. We needed to put a stop to all that. And that's what happened. And we should also take into account that among those boys were people who had fled from Baku and Sumgait.[4]

Further, in answer to the question of whether he had any regrets about the deaths of thousands of people, Serzh Sargsyan said, "I have absolutely no regrets, since such upheavals are necessary, even if thousands have to die".

These words from a person holding the highest political post in Armenia speak for themselves and disprove any denial of responsibility for the crimes committed by the Armenian side in Khojaly and elsewhere in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. It should be noted in particular that Khojaly was seized when Serzh Sargsyan served as senior commander of the illegal armed groups directly engaged in atrocities in the territory of Azerbaijan.

In his Strasbourg speech, trying to instructively recommend to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights how to act and what language to use in their documents, the President of Armenia neglected to recall the important decisions that both institutions have adopted in connection with the conflict and the commitments arising in that regard. It would be pertinent to fill in this gap.

Thus, in its resolution 1416 (2005) of 25 January 2005, the Parliamentary Assembly noted in particular that "considerable parts of the territory of Azerbaijan are still occupied by Armenian forces" and that "the military action, and the widespread ethnic hostilities which preceded it, led to large-scale ethnic expulsion and the creation of mono-ethnic areas which resemble the terrible concept of ethnic cleansing".[5] In its landmark judgment (Merits) of 16 June 2015 in the case of *Chiragov and others v. Armenia*, the European Court of Human Rights effectively put an end to Armenia's persistent denial of its responsibility for the aggression against Azerbaijan and the unlawful occupation of and military presence in my country's territory.[6]

Armenia's allegations about the April 2016 escalation along the front line are yet another attempt to distort the actual situation on the ground and divert attention from the urgent need to address the consequences of its aggression. In reality, what happened then was a direct result and a continuation of Armenia's policy of the use of force against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territories.

It should be noted in particular that, since the very first day of the conflict, combat operations have been conducted exclusively inside the territory of my country, almost in the middle of Azerbaijan, affecting its civilian population and infrastructure. The same concerns the April 2016 escalation, when, as a result of Armenia's attacks, 34 towns and villages in Azerbaijan were shelled, causing casualties among civilians

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[4] Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York and London, New York University Press, 2003).

[5] Resolution 1416 (2005) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, entitled "The conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference", 25 January 2005.

[6] *Chiragov and others v. Armenia*, Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, Judgment (Merits) of 16 June 2015, application No. 13216/05.

and servicemen as well as destroying or substantially damaging private and public property, including residences, schools and kindergartens.

The usual speculation on the Armenian side concerning human rights and self-determination also do not withstand criticism.

Suffice it to mention that, unlike Armenia, which has implemented a policy of total ethnic cleansing of both its own territory and the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, my country has preserved its ethnic and cultural diversity to the present day. Multiculturalism and tolerance are long-standing traditions in Azerbaijan that consolidate our multi-ethnic and multicultural society.

The international community has repeatedly expressed its indignation at the undisguised promotion by the leadership of Armenia of the odious ideas of racial superiority, ethnic and religious incompatibility and hatred towards Azerbaijan and other neighbouring nations. The relevant United Nations bodies and other international organizations, including the Council of Europe, have more than once expressed their serious concern about the spirit of intolerance prevailing in Armenia and the discriminatory policies and practices pursued in that country.

Thus, in its most recent concluding observations on the periodic reports of Armenia, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern at: reports of (a) "racist hate speech and discriminatory statements in public discourse", including by public and political figures and in the media, in particular on the Internet, mainly against religious minorities, asylum seekers and refugees; (b) "discrimination in the granting of asylum status based on ethnicity, religion or national origin"; and (c) "the absence of legislation criminalizing racist organizations and participation in such organizations ...".[7]

In its latest report on Armenia, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance noted, in particular, intolerant statements against Azerbaijanis.[8]

The list of such examples is not exhaustive.

Armenia distorts and misinterprets the principle of the people's right to self-determination and, notwithstanding the concept of self-determination adopted in international law, attempts to impose the view that this principle may be applied in the form of unilateral secession for the Armenians living in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. In reality, such a view has nothing in common with the principle of self-determination set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Final Act) of 1975 and other international documents.

Moreover, it is abundantly clear that claims of self-determination are unsustainable when they are accompanied by egregious violations of international law, including its peremptory norms (*jus cogens*), such as those prohibiting the threat or use of force against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

In that connection, actions that Armenia describes as "the exercise of the right to self-determination" have been unequivocally qualified by the Security Council, as well as by other authoritative international organizations, as the unlawful use of force and the commission of other serious crimes. The international community, including the Council and the General Assembly, has consistently reaffirmed the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan. The illegality of the separatist regime established by Armenia in the

[7] See CERD/C/ARM/CO/7-11, paras. 9, 12 and 17.

[8] European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Report on Armenia (fifth monitoring cycle), adopted on 28 June 2016, para. 31.

occupied territory of Azerbaijan has been repeatedly stated at the international level in the most unambiguous manner.[9]

As a country suffering from Armenia's aggression and its consequences, Azerbaijan is the party most interested in the earliest political settlement of the conflict. At the same time, no peaceful settlement of the conflict can be reached which violates the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and is inconsistent with international law. The resolution of the conflict is possible only on the basis of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders.

The primary objective of the ongoing peace process, which is based on Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), is to ensure the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the exercise by the forcibly displaced population of its inalienable right to return. The achievement of that objective is imperative and can in no way be introduced as a compromise and used as a bargaining chip in the conflict settlement process.

The military occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan does not represent a solution and will never produce an outcome desired by Armenia. Yerevan's irresponsible and provocative policy has no chance of succeeding. Armenia must drop its futile attempts to mislead its own people and the international community, engage constructively in the conflict settlement process and comply with its international obligations.

In the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, meeting in New York in September 2015, stated that there could be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. They reaffirmed their commitment to international law and "the need to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of States".[10]

The sooner Armenia withdraws its armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the earlier the conflict will be resolved and both countries and their peoples will benefit from the prospects of cooperation and economic development, thus enabling them to implement successfully the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 19, 35 and 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

[9] See, for example, A/72/508-S/2017/836.
[10] General Assembly resolution 70/1, preamble and para. 38.